



DEVANG DESAI M.D.

POSTOPERATIVE TONSILLECTOMY INSTRUCTIONS

We wish there were no discomfort after a tonsillectomy, but there is always some and frequently considerable. We are appreciative of it and deeply sympathetic toward it. It is one of the reasons we are extremely conservative in our indications for a tonsillectomy. Some patients are quite miserable for 10 days after tonsillectomy and others are not. There is no way of knowing beforehand how this will affect each patient.

Most of the discomfort is due to muscle soreness, not to the raw surface. For this reason, the first swallows in the morning and during sleeping are always the worst. The patient may awaken from a sound sleep with throat pain referred into the ear as an “earache.”

Chewing pleasant flavored gum forms saliva and increases the rate of gentle swallowing, which decreases the pain. Chew a great deal of gum; always for 30 minutes before meals and frequently in between or in the middle of the night if pains awaken you. Do not use aspirin gum.

Use the pain medicine regularly for discomfort. You should take pain medication every 4-6 hours as needed for pain. Please eat something and drink plenty of fluids prior to taking pain medication, this will help the pain medication not upset your stomach. After 4-5 days, attempt to lengthen the period of the codeine or hydrocodone medications to every 6-8 hours. For breakthrough pain in between, use half the dose of acetaminophen every 4-6 hours if needed. Please avoid aspirin, aspirin-containing products or Ibuprofen/Motrin for four weeks.

Minimal activity is advisable the first day at home, but strict bed rest is not necessary. Activity should be increased each day afterward.

You may have anything to eat or drink that you want. Eat 5-6 light meals for the first few days rather than 3 larger meals. Be sure that fluid intake is adequate the first few days. Supplement it with ice cream, jello, custard, milk shakes, Popsicles, etc. Avoid “tart juices” such as orange juice or lemonade. Increase the consistencies of foods over the first week as tolerated (i.e. soups to mash potatoes and soft vegetables). Please avoid foods with sharp edges such as chips, nuts, and popcorn for four weeks.

We encourage the patient to not resume smoking for at least two weeks.

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If there is any indication of fever, take the temperature and notify the office if it exceeds 101 degrees. A bad breath is usual, but if it is exceedingly foul and accompanied by generalizing aching, please notify the office.

Do not mingle in groups of people or go to work or school for 5-7 days after surgery to avoid contracting infection. For some patients, it may take 2 weeks of recovery before returning to school or work. If you work involves heavy manual labor, then do only "light duty" for the second and third week after surgery.

Between the 5th and 10th postoperative day, the scab comes off the throat surface. More soreness may be experienced for 24 hours. In a few patients, some bleeding occurs as it does with the lifting of any scab. Do not be alarmed. Bleeding is not a terrible thing and is usually readily managed. If it occurs, the day should be spent quietly. Keep the head elevated in a comfortable semi-upright position and suck on ice chips intermittently. If it persists in a significant amount for greater than 10-15 minutes, please call the office and go to the emergency room.

It takes from 3-4 weeks for complete healing. We recommend avoiding moderate or strenuous activity and exercise during this period.

For patients with an associated ear problem, sometimes fluid is removed from the chamber of the middle ear and often restores hearing. This is not a drain tube. Water must not be allowed to get deep in the ear with bathing or swimming.

Please call the office for a follow up appointment for two weeks after your surgery.

It is normal to experience a mild amount of nausea the day of surgery. If this nausea causes excessive vomiting (more than 3 times) you should contact the Doctor for medication to treat the nausea.

For more information regarding tonsillectomy surgery please go to the following website, www.tonsil.org.

We recommend you wake up at 11:00 p.m. and 3:00 a.m. each night for the first 7 to 8 days. During this time awaken and take medication for pain along with a glass of water. Doing so will fasten recovery as you will start drinking immediately in the morning instead of waiting until the afternoon.

